

800531

# **Milwaukee Road Corridor Study**

## **SUMMARY**

### **ROOT RIVER TRAIL PROPOSAL**

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STATE OF MINNESOTA

**1980**



# ROOT RIVER TRAIL

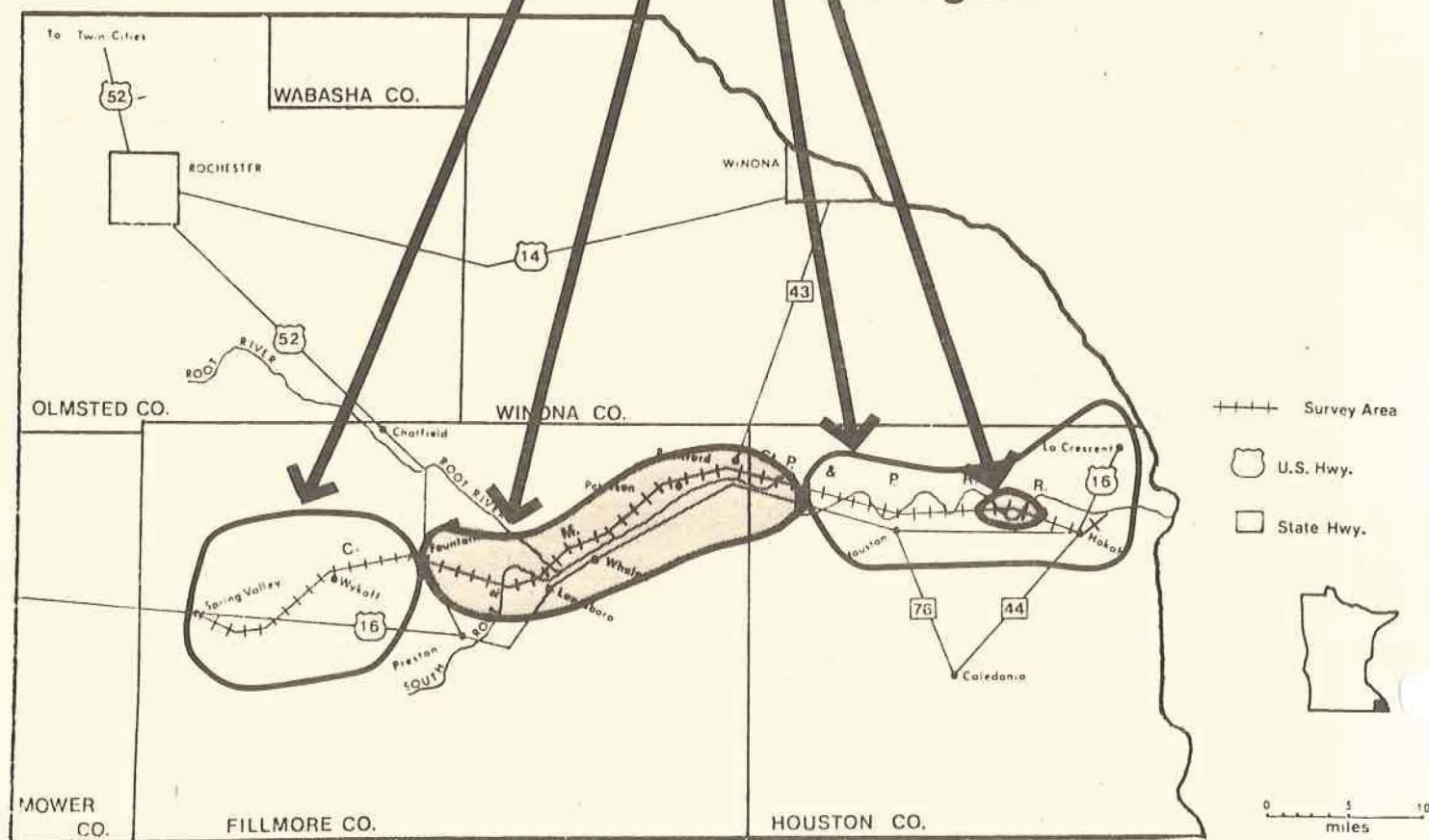
(PROPOSED)

Prioritize DNR's  
Grant-in-Aid snowmobile  
program & Mn/DOT's  
on-road bikeway program

Develop family-safe  
off-road recreational trail

Prioritize MN/DOT's  
on-road bikeway program

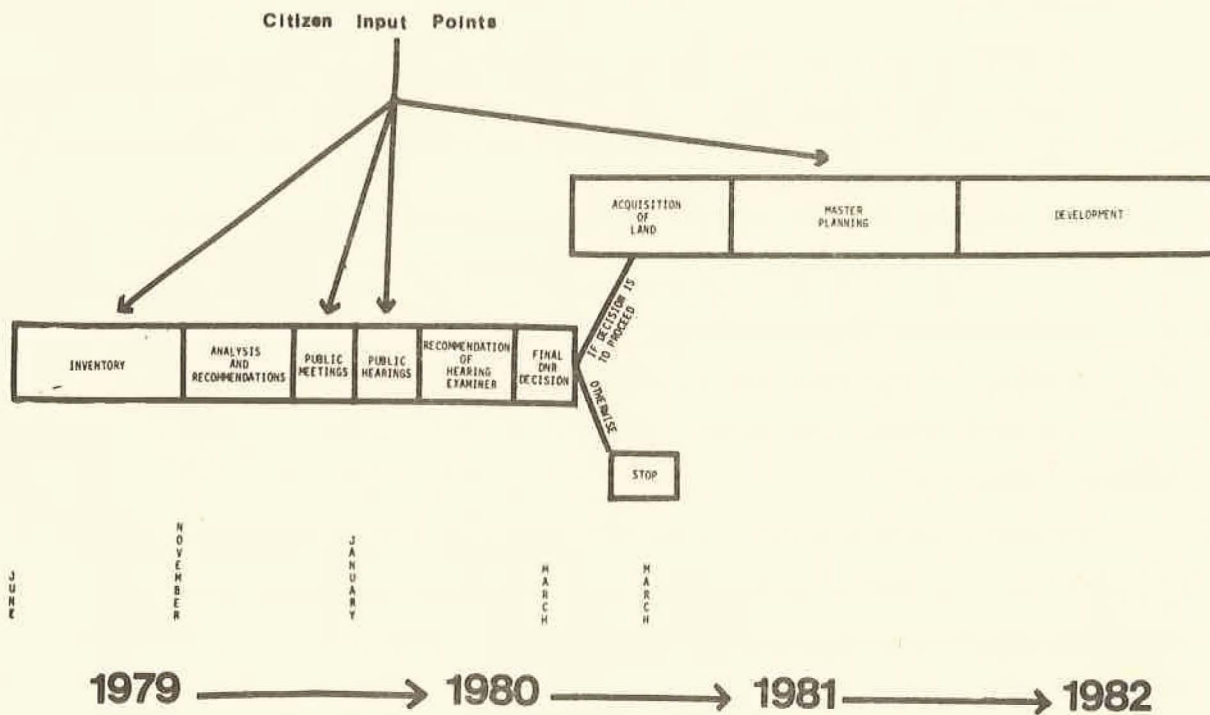
Develop trail segment on  
RR grade



# GOAL

It is the goal of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to identify the segment or segments of the abandoned railroad grade between Ramsey and La Crescent that would provide a family-safe, multi-use recreational trail that is not only scenic and enjoyable, but is also responsive to the needs of adjacent landowners and the communities through which it passes.

## PROCESS & PROPOSED TIMETABLE





# INVENTORY SUMMARY

## Adjacent Landowner Surveys

- Roughly 3 out of every 4 adjacent landowners are opposed to development of a trail along the railroad right-of-way (ROW).
- Spring Valley and Houston appear to be the most strongly opposed Townships.
- In general, fears of those along this ROW have not been substantiated by residents along existing trails.

## Police and Fire Official Surveys

- In general, county sheriffs along existing state trails had favorable reactions towards them.
- The unanimous response of fire officials along existing trails was that they represent a minimal fire hazard and created no special problems for their departments.

## Projected Use

- A trail within the ROW would attract 23,000 uses in its fifth year of operation.

## Rare Natural Resources

- Throughout the ROW the existence of a number of rare plants and animals was documented.
- Three areas of special significance were identified: Hokah Flats, Money Creek Woods, and a number of prairie segments between Ramsey and Spring Valley.

## Scenic Inventory

- Scenery was generally rated good between Spring Valley and Fountain; better between Fountain and Lanesboro; and best between Lanesboro and La Crescent.

## Agricultural Suitability

- Southcentral Minnesota soils are the best in the state.
- In total, 52% of the 72 miles east of Spring Valley is considered "prime" farmland.
- The primary concentration of prime farmlands is found between Spring Valley and Fountain and to a lesser extent between Rushford and Hokah.

## Cultural Resources

- The search of available records located 70 historic and prehistoric sites within a 2 mile corridor along the ROW.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

Two ROW segments that have scenic and other resource values are proposed for trail use. In the final determination, avoidance of prime agricultural lands was given heavy consideration. These segments are located between Fountain and a point one mile east of Money Creek Woods (east of Rushford near Cushing's Peak) a distance of about 37 miles. The second short segment of 5 miles includes Hokah Flats and is between Houston and Hokah.

A primary objective of the proposed trail is to provide for a safe family-type outdoor recreation experience. This would be an off-the-highway trail facility similar to the Spart-Elroy Trail in Wisconsin. That trail has been open for several years and has become a popular recreation facility.

Several discussions between the DNR and the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) have shown that Mn/DOT's bikeway program could provide bikeway continuity using surfaced road shoulders to connect the two proposed DNR trail segments, and also to connect Fountain to Spring Valley and easterly toward La Crescent. This summer trail would then allow for the long distance bicycle tourer to ride from Rochester through the Root River Valley to the Mississippi Valley. Mn/DOT also has plans under study for bikeways along the Mississippi from the Twin Cities to southeastern Minnesota, affording future connection to a Root River Trail near La Crescent.

Grant-in-aid trails now exist between Money Creek Woods and Hokah for snowmobilers. The proposed development would allow users to go all the way from Hokah to Fountain on a combination of grant-in-aid and DNR trails. Between Fountain and Spring Valley there is less grant-in-aid trail. The Department will prioritize this area for additional grant-in-aid snowmobile trail development in the next biennium. That would then connect the entire trail between Spring Valley and La Crescent for winter snowmobiling recreation.

Finally, although the DNR is proposing to acquire 42 miles of ROW, there appear to be places within the two identified segments where the trail could be accommodated on state, county, or township road rights-of-way, or otherwise located in such a manner that portions of the railroad grade would not have to be used.

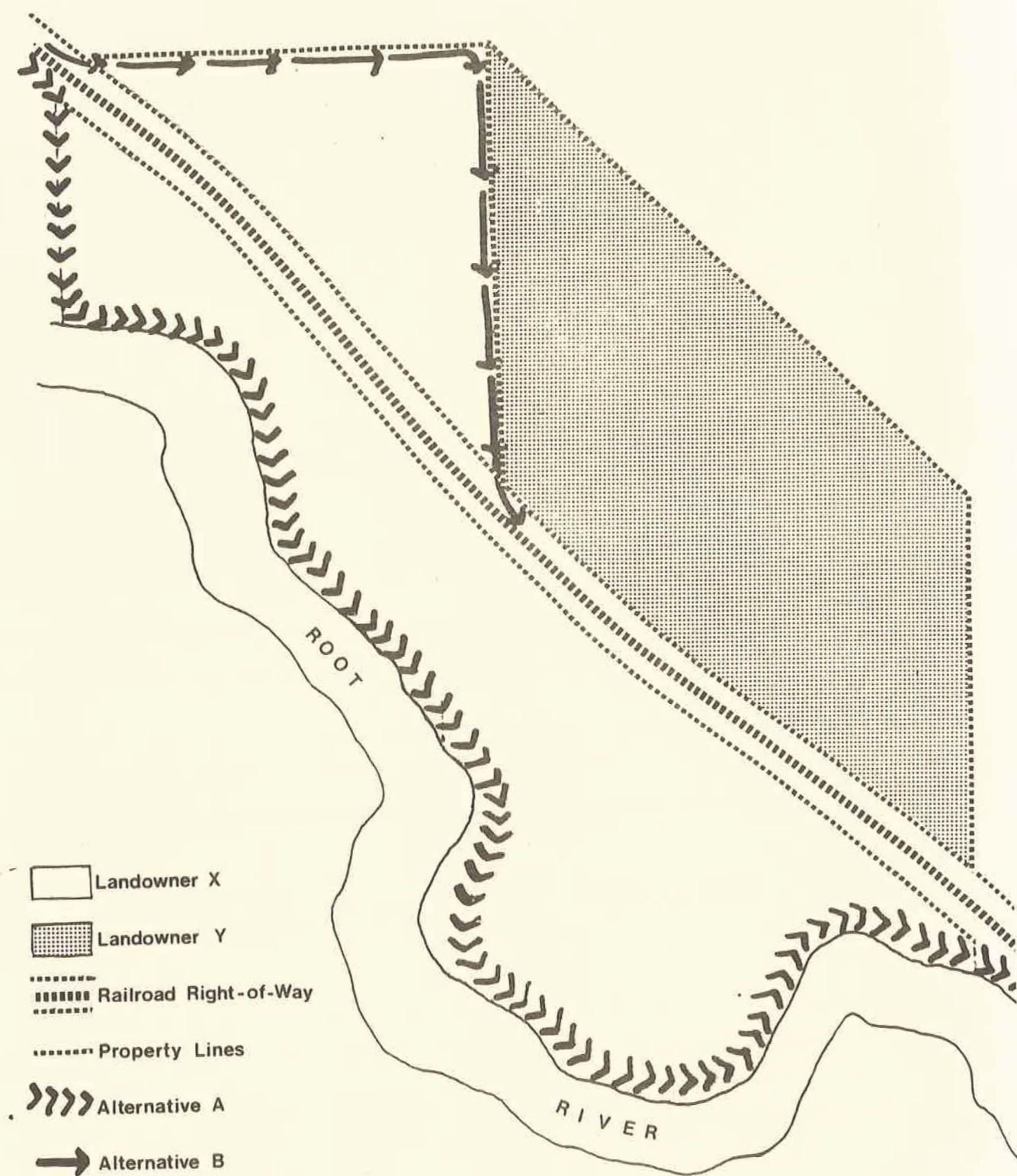
Some of those places have been identified and will be considered for further study if the DNR acquires the two identified segments.

They are grouped as follows:

- (1) Location of Trail Starting and Ending Points: the beginning and ending points have been identified as Fountain and a point one mile east of Money Creek Woods. These could be further refined if other suitable locations can be identified.
- (2) In-city Alternatives: opportunities may exist in Lanesboro, Whalan, Peterson and Rushford to avoid using the railroad grade by following city streets or other public lands.
- (3) Farmland Bypasses: there appear to be places where the trail could be rerouted to avoid potential land use conflicts.

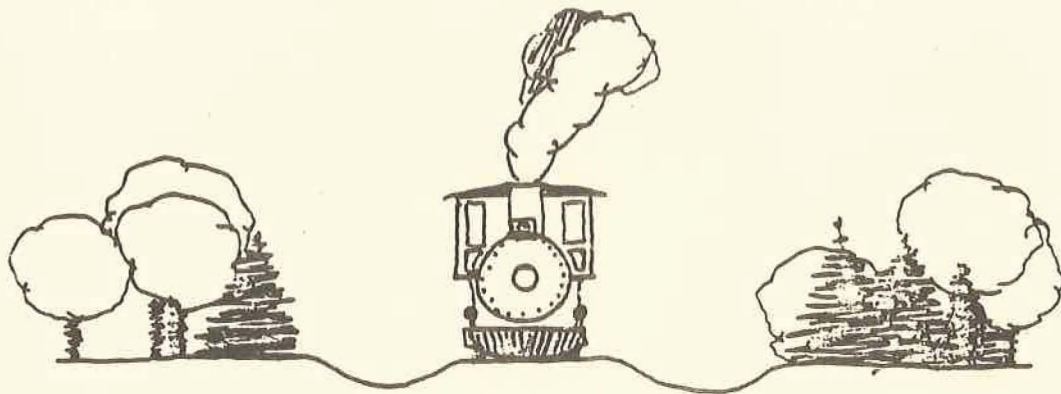
Trail alignment and other details would be worked out through the master planning process required by the Outdoor Recreation Act of 1975 (M.S. 86A), which would occur only after the purchase of railroad grade segments by DNR. A citizen's advisory group would be asked to assist in working out alternatives in the planning process. The DNR would do everything possible to accomodate the movement of farm equipment.



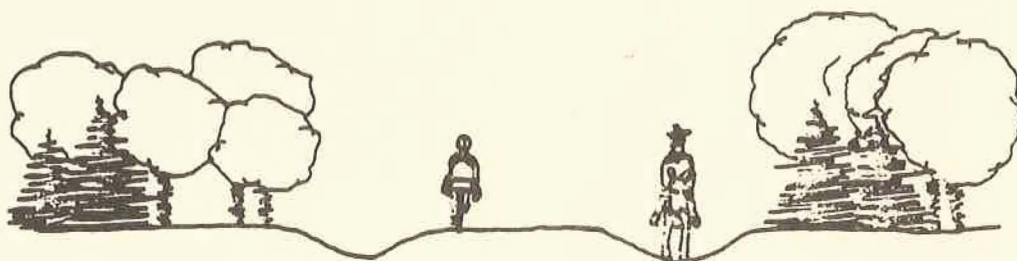


## Routing Alternatives

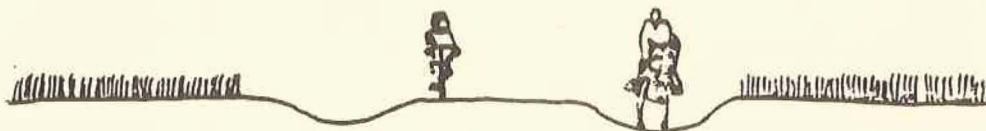
FORMER USE



TYPICAL  
DEVELOPMENT



MINIMUM  
RIGHT-OF-WAY



MINIMUM  
RIGHT-OF-WAY  
WITH GRADE  
LEVELED



## Right-of-Way Modification Alternatives